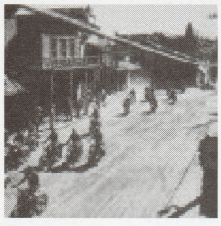
June 2010
Two-Wheeler Town

100% FREE *RAG* CONTENT

Depot Town Rag

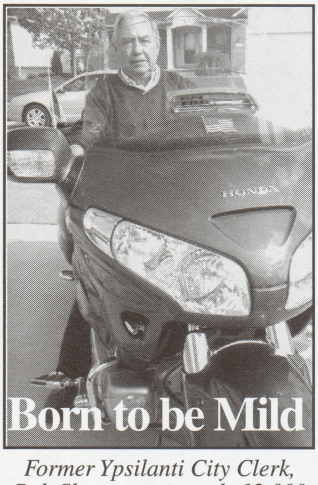
Volume 22, Number 4

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198



More that half a century's worth of Black Leather History

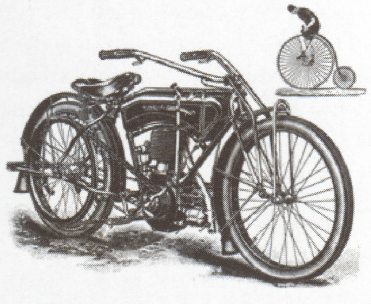
- **1953, Marlon Brando, *The Wild One***
  B&W movie glamorizes outlaw motorcycle culture (above)
- **1966, Hunter S. Thompson's *Hell's Angels***
  Gonzo journalist embeds self with California gang
- **1967, Ypsilanti's God's Children MC Club**
  Wannabe local club gets bombed in Depot Town
- **2009, Café Racer opens**
  Becomes haven for vintage motorcycle enthusiasts



Former Ypsilanti City Clerk, Bob Slone, now travels 12,000 miles a year on his favorite two-wheeler: a 2008 Honda Gold Wing 1800. In his pre-City Clerk days, Slone was co-owner of the Honda of Ann Arbor motorcycle dealership

Cult classic

He wore black denim trousers
and motorcycle boots
And a black leather jacket
with an eagle on the back.
He had a hopped-up cycle
that took off like a gun,
That fool was the terror
of Highway 101
-Juke box hit of the late 1950s



As we children of God put aside childish things like war and greed and finally become adults of God, we will evolve past the Ten Commandments to the One Suggestion: Love they neighbor, otherwise there goes the neighborhood."

-Swami Beyondananda, "The Up-wising Has Begun!"

God's Children MC gang: at home in Depot Town

-James Mann

In the 1960s and 1970s the Depot Town section of Ypsilanti had an unsavory reputation. This was the part of town fathers told their daughters to stay out of. This section of the city had been in decline for some time, and the presence of God's Children did not help. These Children of God did not sing in the choir, but were a motorcycle group (insiders called it a club, outsiders said "gang"), an offshoot of the nefarious Hell's Angles.

The God's Children motorcycle club was founded as a club in January of 1967 and set up headquarters at 25 1/2 East Cross Street. The group stayed out of trouble until the 4th of July of 1967, when they threatened to invade the Happyland Shows carnival in Waterworks Park and "tear the place up."

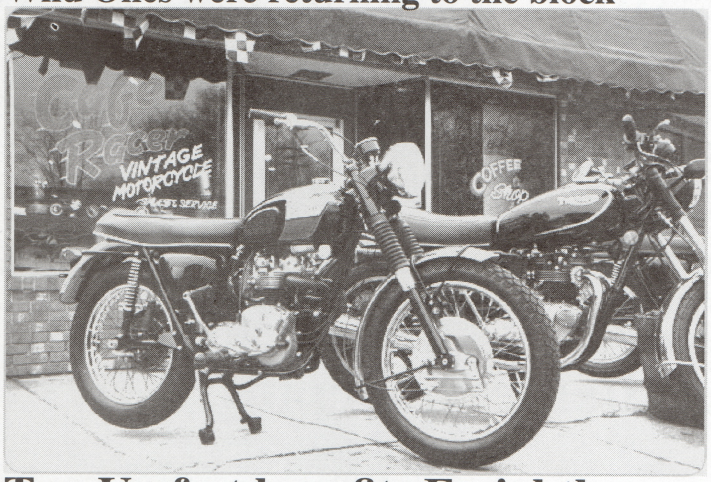
For a number of years, the city of Ypsilanti celebrated the 4th of July with a carnival at Waterworks Park. The fun at the carnival was marred in 1967 by racial trouble. According to police, a member of the club had been assaulted by a group of African-Americans on Sunday, July 2, and the members of God's Children gathered at the carnival on Tuesday, July 4, to "even the score."

Police arrested two members of the gang after heavy chains were found on the back window shelf of their car. Two other members of the gang were arrested when police found heavy chains with padlocks wrapped around their waists. Police forced open the trunk of a car belonging to a member of the gang, and found 15 Molotov Cocktails (fire bombs), a wire whip with fishhooks attached to the ends of the wires, heavy chains, a fish spear, an umbrella with a spear taped to the tip, a small pronged garden hoe, and wooden and metal clubs.

Four members of the club were charged with carrying dangerous weapons and two of them, along with six other members of the gang, were charged with conspiracy to incite a public disturbance. Eleven gang members were charged by police.

"Several of the motorcyclists, after being *[continued overleaf]*

Just a year ago, we wondered if the Wild Ones were returning to the block



Ton-Up fest benefits Freighthouse

-Ray Peabody, Publisher, Midwest Motorcyclist

The inaugural Ton-Up Motorcycle and Music Festival is coming to Depot Town on Saturday, June 26. This event—a combination vintage motorcycle and scooter show, music festival and tasteful vintage pin-up contest—is expected to attract several thousand motorcycle, scooter and music enthusiasts to the area.

"As a relatively new business in Depot Town, we're excited to be an organizer and producer of The Ton-Up," said Leah Halbert, co-owner of Café Racer Vintage Motorcycle Sales and Service. "The people most likely to attend are middle-aged motorcycle enthusiasts who tend to be both educated and affluent. They are nice folks who have money and will spend it. We expect this event will be beneficial not only to our business but also for every other business in town. Plus, it's going to be whole lot of fun!"

The Ton-Up Inc., located at Café Racer, 10 E. Cross Street, is a non-profit organization designed to support local community and charitable organizations. The renovation of the historic Freighthouse has been selected as the beneficiary of this inaugural event.

For more information about The Ton-Up, stop by Café Racer or give Leah Halbert a call at (734) 879-1201.

Back-story:
"Ton-Up" tradition transplanted here

"Ton-Up" is a slang phrase that began in England in the Sixties when racers of fast motorcycles would get together at local coffee houses and dare each other to race to the next coffee house—and back—before their favorite rock-a-billy record had finished in the jukebox. Routes and speed limit tolerances were discussed and it appeared a rider would have to exceed more than a hundred miles an hour (a ton, in Brits' parlance), to accomplish the feat. "Ton Up" indicated they would have to exceed one hundred miles an hour to get back to their coffee and music in time.

God's Children *[continued from page one]*

herded into the garage at the police station to await booking, damaged a heavy overhead door, trying to open it. Police Chief Ray H. Walton said he didn't know whether any escaped because of the large number in the room," reported *The Ypsilanti Press* of Wednesday, July 5, 1967. Several members of the gang were sentenced to time in jail for their actions.

That same month saw the first gang wedding, of which the mother of the groom described as, "different." The parents of the bride were not in attendance, as it was explained: "They're working."

"The groom, wearing an Iron Cross, motorcycle boots, and a blue denim vest that left his chest bare, walked with his bride to the shade of some box elder trees. She wore a pink and white dress and flats," reported *The Ypsilanti Press* of July 22, 1967.

"The backyard ceremony Saturday afternoon was brief," noted the account. "The proper words were said. The couple kissed. Then someone said the rings had been forgotten. That matter attended to, the couple kissed again."

The gang members enjoyed riding their motorcycles on the unpaved trails on the then undeveloped land around Ford Lake. When not riding their motorcycles, the members would stop and take part in other physical activities. Young boys observing from the safety of tree limbs, were said to have learned things their parents would not have wanted them to at that age.

God's Children caused little trouble in Depot Town itself, but their presence was intimidating. Some objected to their running naked in the street, while others said this was an improvement. Those who looked in the windows of the Central Bar (Sidetrack), it is said, risked being beaten. Consensus was that, for Depot Town to flourish, God's Children had to go. Residents sought ways to encourage the gang to move on.

On the night of July 18, 1971, someone dropped an explosive device down the chimney of the building where their clubhouse was. The explosive device apparently caught half way down the chimney. The device exploded at 11:53 p.m. and did considerable damage to the second and third floors of the building. At the time of the explosion there were eight to ten persons in the clubroom, but none was injured. "Club members," reported The Ypsilanti Press of July 19, 1971, "told police they didn't know anything about the incident."

According to local legend, the gang said this did not scare them and that they were not leaving. The gang then left on a vacation-----from which they have yet to return.

Once the gang was gone, the urban pioneers who had settled in the neighborhood—and were investing their time and money in the old buildings and new businesses—took over. A new age had begun.

[James Mann's newest book, ***Weird Washtenaw****, will be in bookstores this fall, published by The History Press]*

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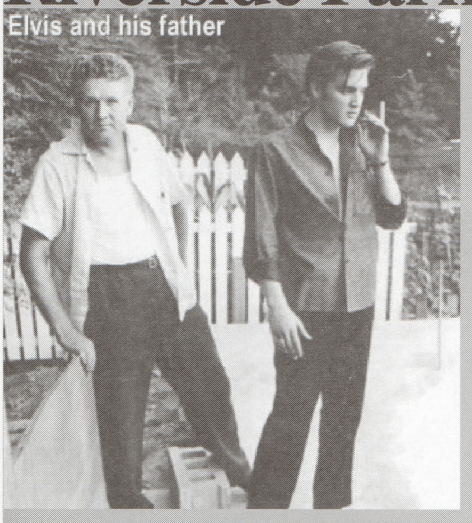
Michigan ElvisFest returns to Riverside Park July 9 & 10

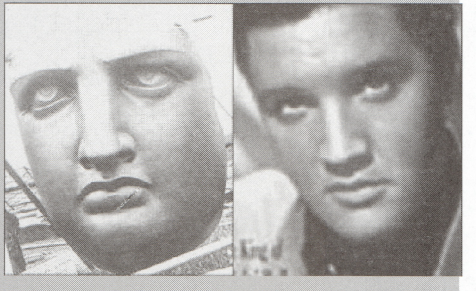


Vernon Presley and son, Elvis, discuss a cement block on their front porch in Tupelo, MS

Elvis (on his bike!), in his pre-Cadillac days, obliged fans with his autograph

Early E-trike

11th annual Michigan ElvisFest



Observant photographers have noticed similarities between the Statue of Liberty and Elvis

This is not a contest but a true concert with spectacular performances—from the first act to the last act—by the best professional Elvis Tribute Artists in North America.

"One of the best music festivals in the Mid-west," *-Chicago Tribune*

"One of the ten festivals in Michigan you'd hate to miss," *-MiLife MiTimes*

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Bike Supporters beyond Depot Town

-Source: Parade magazine, 27 September 2009

Across the country, the number of bicyclists has exploded, said *Parade* magazine in September. Between 2003 and 2007, the number of American bike commuters increased 38%. In 2007, 698 cyclists nationwide were killed and more than 44,000 were injured in collisions with motor vehicles.

The Federal Highway Administration has launched a pilot program with an aim to make roads safer and more enjoyable. More than $90 million has been allocated for four communities—Columbia, MO; Minneapolis; Sheboygan County, WI; and Marin County, CA. Each will receive about $22.5 million to make them more bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly.

Columbia, MO, (pop. 100,733) saw the number of cyclists riding midweek increase by 71% from 2007 to 2008. There are now about 10,000 people riding that city's streets.

New York City spent three years building 200 miles of bike lanes.

Louisville, KY, lured more than 10,000 cyclists to a Mayor's Memorial Day Hike & Bike Ride.

Carmel, IN, identified a 100-mile network, an "Access Bikeway," that consists of existing streets on which cyclists can safely ride.

Congress is watching such programs, toward the passage of a new transportation bill that reportedly could devote up to $1 billion a year to facilitate biking and walking across the country.

Since 1992, **Portland, OR**, has spent almost $60 million—about the cost of building one mile of an urban highway––to enhance its cycling infrastructure. The number of riders flowing across the city's bridges has more than quadrupled, and on one bridge last year, more than 20% of all trips were made by bicycle.

Boulder, CO: 85% of major roads have bike lanes or trails. In 2005, the city was among the first to launch a Safe Routes to School program to encourage kids to walk and bike to school.

Tucson, AZ: All new street construction is required to include bike lanes. The city created a "Share the Road" safety guide for bicyclists and motorists.

Davis, CA: One of the first cities to incorporate bicycling into its transportation infrastructure, the university town of 60,000 has more bikes than cars.

Sturgis, SD's motorcycle rally:

Just a little bit like Ypsi's Heritage Festival?

The Sturgis Rally is a motorcycle event held annually in Sturgis, South Dakota each first full week of August. Founded on August 14, 1938 by the Jackpine Gypsies Motorcycle Club, the Jackpines still own and operate the tracks, hillclimb, and field areas the rally is concentrated around. The first rally lasted two days and consisted of racing and stunts.

The founder is generally considered to be Clarence "Pappy" Hoel who is still honored in various ways by loyal local and visiting participants. "Pappy" is Sturgis's Nat Edmunds.

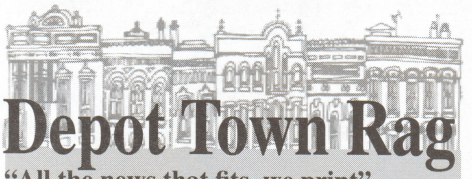
Over the years, the main focus of the motorcycle rally remains much the same. This could include half mile track racing (the first year in Sturgis, there were 19 participants), board wall crashes (intentional), ramp jumps and head-on collisions with automobiles.

The Sturgis Rally has been held every year except during World War II.

In modern times, there has been a revitalization of motorcycling and a new group of fans interested in the old rallies. This has led to huge attendance numbers for classic rallies such as Sturgis. Attendance was estimated at 514,951 in 2004, and 525,250 in 2005. This rivals the resident population of the entire state: 754,844 in 2000.

In the next *Rag*:

We celebrate our 234th birthday with pomp and tradition, processions and decorations...



Depot Town Rag

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The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place
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To the editor:
thomasdodd@comcast.net

The Depot Town Association, Inc.

Gary McKeever, President
Michelle Shankwiler, Vice President
Ruth Ann Jamnick, Treasurer
Sandee French, Scy. & Past President
Website: www.depottown.org

DTA meets at 6:30 p.m on the third Wednesday of each month at Café Luwak, 42 East Cross Street.

An MC morality tale

A cowboy from Texas appeared before St. Peter at the Pearly Gates.

"Have you ever done anything of particular merit?" St. Peter asked.

"Well, I can think of one thing," the cowboy offered.

"On a trip to the Black Hills out in South Dakota , I came upon a gang of bikers, who were threatening a young woman.

I directed them to leave her alone, but they wouldn't listen. So I approached the largest and most heavily tattooed biker and smacked him in the face. I kicked his bike over, ripped out his nose ring, and threw it on the ground. I yelled, 'Now, back off!! Or I'll kick the stuffin's out of all of you!'"

St. Peter was impressed, "When did this happen?"

"Just a couple of minutes ago..."

Our new editorial policy?

Calendar Art on an inside page!

The rest of the story:

When professional photographers shot their model for a calendar page at the Michigan Firehouse Musuem at E. Cross and N. Huron Streets, they used Fire Chief Johnny Ichesco's motorcycle to set the stage.

What next year needs is a Depot Town Calendar!

Firefighters do it. Fat folks do it. Even liver-colored dogs do it. It seems like everybody's got their own parody of a pin-up-girl calendar. How about it, Depot Towners? Are you ready to show some skin for 2011? Send your submissions to the editor for review.

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Forrest continues historical habits

Cycling tradition continues here

Forrest Karnopp's longest single bike ride was 113 miles in one day. It was a fund-raising ride from Chelsea to Traverse City and back. "We camped in tents for that trip," says Karnopp, but we could also have chosen to stay in motels or local gymnasiums.

Karnopp is active with Bike Ypsi, a group dedicated to getting more people back riding their bikes. "Lots of people have a rusty old bike in their garage that hasn't been ridden in years," he says, "and we'll help them get it running again and even ride with them for a while."

Forrest's bike is not one of those old rusty jobs, however. He rides a Kona, fixed-gear with a flip-flop hub. It's a single speed bike and the flip-flop mechanism makes it possible to coast—and rest. But Karnopp does not rest much. When he's not working at the family's Café Luwak, he's out on the road somewhere with his bike.

Vehicles or peds? A² still can't decide

Ann Arbor's City Council is still ambivalent about bike laws and one is likely to be run down by one on any sidewalk around the campus of the Athens of the Midwest.

Ypsilanti, however, makes a clear distinction between vehicular and pedestrian traffic: ALL vehicles obey the rules of the street, pedestrians stay on the sidewalks. That logic has even been bumper stickered: "Same roads, same rights, same rules!"

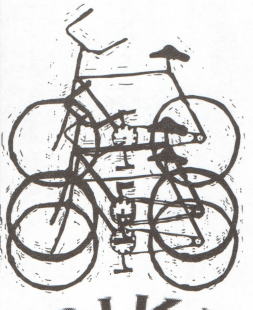
Ypsi's skateboarders (vehicles with pedestrians attached?) are relegated to specially constructed courses in parks and on private properties.

Life is like a ten-speed bike; most of us have gears we never use.

Earliest two-wheelers persevered

The Ypsilanti cycling club was integrated in the 1920s

Resting in front of McPherson & House grocery at 46 E. Cross



Rider group says it can get you riding again

The Ypsilanti Bicycling Coalition (Bike Ypsi) is a group of local cyclists who like riding bikes and engaging in bike-related shenanigans. The Web site tells how they organized in the summer of 2007 "as a conversation regarding bicycle awareness between cyclists and law enforcement." Talk soon led to action and they soon became an organization to advocate for Ypsilanti cyclists. "We came together in order to provide a place for anyone in Ypsilanti who likes to bike to connect to other bike folk. We go on group rides (small and big, short and long), promote awareness of cycling in Ypsi, encourage safe routes around town, and address issues important to cyclists... we hope to make Ypsi the most bicycle friendly city possible."

Bike Ypsi advocates can best be found on their weekly rides (see Web site for schedule). But, in the off-season (wet, cold, snowy), they are usually exercising "in groups large and small - lifting a mug, a pint, or a hand to make a point."

"If we're not riding," say the local cyclists, "there's always the virtual places to find us..." Check them out at bike.ypsi.org.

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DAILY

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WEEKLY

Farmers' Market on Saturdays
Vintage bikes and movies on Tuesdays
Autos of all kinds on Thursdays

MONTHLY

First Friday art gallery hopping
Old fashioned print media since 1976

ANNUALLY

Parades, festivals, concerts, competitions

First anniversary

WR WINDING ROAD

Winding Road, a digital magazine for drivers, has been headquartered at 9 East Cross Street in historic Depot Town for a year now, but who would notice? There's no sign in front, just a digital hook-up to the universe from right beside the entrance to Frog Island Park.

Editor in Chief Seyth Miersma and his crew at this digital auto publication are in good company: across the street from Café Racer, down the block from the Ypsilanti Auto Museum, and on the very street and park where vintage autos are shown throughout the summer.

Look them up at www.windingroad.com.

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RAGTIME

Coming events

Sunday, June 6
14th Annual Ypsilanti Orphan Car Show
Riverside Park

Tuesday nights
All Summer Long
Motorcycle Mania
E. Cross St. in Depot Town

June 10 - September 9
Thursday evenings 5-9 (unless it rains)
Depot Town Cruise Nights
E. Cross St. in Depot Town

19-20 June
American Cancer Society's Relay For Life
Riverside Park

June 26
Ton-Up Motorcycle & Music Festival
East Cross St. & Riverside Park

July 2, 3, 4
Michigan Camaro Superfest
Riverside Park
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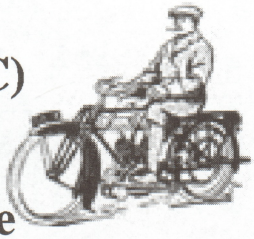

Motorcycle mechanics' national median salary is $33,540 according to the Spring/Summer issue of Washtenaw Community College's *Career Focus* tabloid. WCC offers specialized courses in their School of Automotive and Motorcycle Technology including I Certificate and II Advanced Certificate for Motorcycle Service Technician.

"If you are looking for the best technical training in the automotive or motorcycle fields," says WCC, this is "the place for you. Whether your focus is finding employment as a technician, learning about performance or creating a custom look, our intermediate and advanced certificate programs—as well as associate's degrees—will enhance your personal and professional qualifications. These programs offer the perfect blend of classroom and hands-on education not available in any other educational setting."

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